

1912
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SONGS FROM THE DOWNSIDE OF THINGS

FRANCIS CHAPMAN

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

Devices and Desires.

Uniform with SONGS FROM THE DOWNS AND DUNES.

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"The most sacred of all these poems is the last. It is an infinitely moving elegy on the author's mother."

READY AUTUMN, 1908.

ON THE DOWNS

*will be published separately, with a
series of pictures of*

D O W N L A N D

BY SUSSEX ARTISTS.

*The dedication of this poem has been
accepted by*

Mr. RUDYARD KIPLING.

SONGS FROM THE
DOWNS AND DUNES

Abbeyton Lulham.

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SONGS FROM THE DOWNS & DUNES

BY
HABBERTON LULHAM



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TO
MY FRIEND
JOHN BART ROUS
THESE POEMS ARE DEDICATED,
WITH DEEP GRATITUDE FOR ALL HIS
SYMPATHY AND ADVICE
IN THE WRITING
OF THEM.

THE thanks of the Author, for permission to reprint some twenty of the fifty poems in this volume, are due to the Editors of the *Outlook*, the *Evening Standard* and *St. James's Gazette*, the *Lone Hand* (*Sydney Bulletin*), the *Westminster Gazette*, the *Daily News*, the *Pall Mall Magazine*, and the *Observer*.

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The Wayfarer

(To J.B.R.)

*Lonely and irked, on crowded, clamorous ways,
To quiet lanes and meadow-paths he steals,
Yet still the road's insistent summons feels,
And, fain of some clear beacon, stands at gaze ;
Then toils on, with misgivings and delays,
Jostled, and outstripped by the lighter heels,
Or mire-stained from the careless, passing wheels,
And growing heartsick at the homeless days.*

*May kindly Hermes send him such a friend
As, turning, once, I found beside me strode,
For straight there came a sense of lifted load,
Hope waved me onward from each dusty bend,
And Faith sang cheerly of the journey's end,
That day you overtook me on the Road.*

*From the valley—'Bare downs only,'
Said I, in my haste to pass,
Till I climbed, and, lying lonely,
Found soft moss and flowering grass.*

*So, across bleak sand-dunes riding,
Past the net-hung fisher-cots,
Found I, 'neath the rough bents hiding,
Blue, unguessed forget-me-nots.*

*Striving now to pierce the human
Discord, for the hidden tunes,
I can meet no man or woman,
But I mind the downs and dunes.*

DITCHLING,
April, 1908.

*Songs from the
Downs and Dunes.*

ON THE DOWNS

DEAR Sussex Downs, my long-beloved hills,
With what deep joy, though but in memory,
I tread once more the little, narrowing lane—
Hung with wild clematis and patterned o'er
With sheep-prints—leading from the meadow-lands
Up through the belt of beeches, to the path
The shepherd's feet at morn and eve have worn
Aslant your ridgy sides : thither I climb,
With many a pause and backward glance to see
The riches long since hoarded in my heart
Outspread once more.

Above the beeches now—
And startled wood-pigeon come clattering out ;
There in the hollow lies the little farm,
The cattle and the great, mild horses stand

Snug in the straw-yards ; still the old red tile
Is ringed and starred and rich encrusted o'er
With orange lichens, and the ancient thatch
Embossed with mossy cushions ; I can hear
The clink of milk-pails ring up cheerfully,
The creak and jingle as that waggon jolts
Over the gateway ruts into the yard ;
See, from the dairy door a maid comes out,
And calls the waggoner ; hark to his voice,
The jolly rustic burr and tang, and hear
Her merry laugh. Look how that kenneled dog
Leaps barking out, routing from off his bowl
The pilfering pigeons—one can hear their wings
Clap as they start up to the stable-roof.
Now from the meadows, through the winding lanes,
The slow cows saunter to the milking-shed,
Stopping, to drink deep, in the farm-yard pond,
One by one floundering out, their blowing breath
Rising white-clouded on the early air,
As each goes swinging through the cow-shed door.
And, far a-field, see where those three black spots
Up the low foot-hills plod so tardily
One scarce can tell they move ; black oxen they,
Three yoke, that still, as in the ancient years,
Drag the great wains, and in the autumn days
Turn their slow furrows, with a following line
Of feeding rooks, and sea-forsaking gulls.

But on and upwards, loitering, fortunate feet !
There's the old thorn still clinging to the slope,
More crabb'd and gnarled, but white with bloom
again,

Hung round with webs and waving gossamers
All dew-bediamonded. It marks the spot
Whence I can see an old, grey homestead stand,
With gardens, meadow-land, and grove of firs :
Dear boyhood's home, I scarce dare look again
And think how once I loved these circling hills
Only that from your windows they looked blue,
And that I knew them good to gallop on ;
Little I guessed then, ringed about with love,
The fearful worth a lonely heart should learn
To praise you for, O perdurable hills !
Blessing your rooffast changelessness amid
A world of change and loss. But brood no more,
My heart, life still shines rich with others' hopes
And loves ; look up, see, we draw near the crest—
Ah ! . . . once again I stand upon thy brow,
O blessed hill, my Hesperid, the home
My heart loves best on earth, green headland-isle
Set all about with blue ;—the new-made light
Floats like an infinite, azure melody,
And hark ! not fancy's voice alone I hear,
A score of happy larks rain down their love ;
Below, to northward, the blue counties lie,

With fold on fold of meadow-land and plough,
Bright water, darkling woods and shining spires,
With loitering lanes and free adventurous roads ;
While, south, a dream-horizon melts around
The wide, blue sea, whose murmurous undertones
Are woven through the birds' bright melody.
Thou, too, blest upland breeze, sing'st in my ears
Still the old, heartening song of happier days,
And with closed eyes I once again breathe deep
Thy sea-scent and the spice of gorse and thyme,
With floated balm of many a blossomed vale.

These perfumes, colours, songs of air and sea,
This blessed sunshine, and the joyous sense
Of height and space and freedom, how they flood
My thirsting heart with tides of thankfulness !
Dear Downs ! that lead the feet not over-high
Above the homes and humble ways of men,
Yet lift the soul to visionings beyond ;
That whisper of the cosmic harmony,
While still the ear may catch the touching sounds
Of human toil and mirth ; how rich ye make
Your lover !—as a king that dips his hand
Idly within a casket of rare gems,
So he who loves you draws forth when he will
And lingers over jewel-memories ;
Or as a man may hasten to her arms
Who shows him ever some new spirit-face,

Some unguessed witchery, or wealth of heart,
With welcome and the boon of home in all,
So from the world I seek you joyfully.

How oft have I climbed eastward ere the dawn,
My footprints dark upon your grey, wet grass,
And seen the sunrise crown the dewy crest
Above me with an irised coronet ;
Or marked the rising tide of golden light
Flood up the sunward slopes, and overflow
The rims of purple hollows, those great cups
That every morn await the glorious wine
That sets them brimming. Often have I seen
Rivers of clear air running through the hills
To cut bright channels in that shadow-land
Of pearly, morning mist, far 'neath my feet.
And when the great salt winds come streaming by,
How the cloud-shadows smoke across the vales,
And as each rounded down is dimmed a space,
It seems to sink, then upwards heaves once more
Into the sunshine, till one dreams he sees
The dear Earth-Mother's bosom rise and fall.

Lonely they deem thee, they who love thee not ;
Yet may one pace the brilliant, thronging town,
Alone 'mid hearts whose thoughts are alien all,
But find in thee his soul's companioning.

And what a haunt for lovers!—well I mind
A lightfoot lad who climbed here long ago
With one he loved, weaving a little song,
Glad as the mating linnets in the gorse,
And singing as they roamed this happy hill:—

*“Lured,” little one? Nay, you’ve but heard
Love o’er your wild downs roaming;
Not lured, my bird, my light swift bird,
But homing—homing!*

*“Caught,” does she feel? Nay, no net stirred
To catch the heart fore-fated;
Not caught, my bird, my bright wild bird,
But mated—mated!*

*And “caged,” she fears? Nay, never that word
Of where your brown head rested;
Not caged, my bird, my shy sweet bird,
But nested—nested!*

And thine, my Downs, are flowers, birds, butter-
flies—

All this old world keeps of her golden age—
Here, like a tender thought from some great mind,
The delicate hare-bell gems thy massy front;
Here, as a child amid its elders grave,

That least of linnets rears his crimson crest
And cheers the silence with his merry call ;
And here—a flying flower, or flock of sky—
The tiny fairy-queen of butterflies
Trembles her azure wings. And, all unseen
About me, elemental presences
Hover and haunt; 'tis sure some airy sprite
Skimming the hill-top now, whose startled wing
Sets the blue scabious-flowers all a-wave,
Until the beech-leaves quiver suddenly
Down in the hollow at the hanger's edge,
Where those frail pinions flutter in to hide.
And morn and evening to the dew-pond's marge
Come the mild daughters of the mist and cloud,
Each with her brimming amphora, whence she
pours
Her blessed distillation, to renew
The dwindling waters that the sun-sprites drink
And frolic in by day. And, of wild nights,
Lost things come wailing through the deep-cut
ghylls,
With strange reiterant cries. And night and day
Great patient powers are labouring ceaselessly
To bear up ridge and buttress, and sustain
The mighty slopes. Aye, these and multitudes
Of hopes and fears, delights and sorrowings
Haunt every path, for on each silent spot

Some human heart has throbbed with joy or pain,
And all the air is quick with ancient dreams.

But see, there stands, still in the earthly toils,
A brother soul, a shepherd of the hills ;
Alone he bides, a tall old man, and leans
With knotty hands clasping his hazel crook ;
The old, blue cloak, patched, worn and weather-
stained,
Hangs to his leathern leggings ; at his feet
His two dogs lie, and down the hill below,
In a long sickle-line, the feeding sheep
Call in a hundred tones and sound their bells—
Hark to the mellow music ! Sit by him,
And silent though he be from many a year
Of hill-side solitudes, yet, as the pine
On yonder crest speaks when the strong wind stirs
Its heart, the breath of sympathy will break
His silentness ; and, wiser than he knows,
He hides a world of curious lore behind
Those weather-beaten eyes. Lead him to tell
His tales of dogs and sheep ; of heavy ewes
Frighted by furze-owls or up-springing hares,
And bringing forth strange, beaked, and furry
lambs ;
Of how his dogs bark, cowering to the sky,
And sheep rush panic-stricken when they hear

The witch-hounds in full cry stream overhead,
Hunting some flying soul back to its doom.
And hints has he of arcane mysteries,
He knows of false dawns, and the hour of Flight,
That cold, dead hour that comes ere night be done,
When dying hearts beat feeblest, and the soul
Most often slips its bars and wings away,
Fanning the air about Earth's sleeping face ;
That is the mystic wind that moves his sheep
To wander a little ; that awakes the larks
To one short flight, and faint, half-hearted song ;
And makes his sleeping dogs uncurl, look forth,
Whimper, and stretch their limbs, and turn and
turn

About, ere they can rest again ; he tells
How then the upper eastern sky grows light
A space, as if those homing wings broke through
Its leaden grey, or dawn were drawing nigh—
Then, sleep and darkness settle back once more.
And he can tell how down the midnight coombe's
Green, winding hollows, still the little folk
Go dancing 'neath the moon, and round their rings
Sit in applauding circles while their queen,
Light-poised upon a mushroom's milky crest,
Lilts the old fairy laws and spells once more,
Then speeds their quivering wings upon her
quests :—

*' Now haste ye, haste and help me,
 The Downs are shining white,
 And we must do ere moonset
 A hundred things to-night :
 Fly some to Sunny Woodland
 Where happy Thoughts are stored,
 And choose a dream of Heart's-home,
 The tenderest of your hoard—*

*Some hope true lovers left us
 Of comrade-lives to be,
 And breathe it to that wanderer
 Who passed so wearily.
 Take thoughts from closing daisies,
 And nightingales' bright dreams,
 And sing them to the sick child
 Down where the candle gleams.
 Wing away !*

*And some, to make the colours
 We drop in babies' eyes,
 Must steal the soft, blue wing-dust
 From sleeping butterflies,
 To mix with azure essence
 Of speedwell, violet,
 And that small, lovers' blossom
 That bids them not forget.*

*From mists that veil the meadows
Or steal up from the bay,
Distil the shadowy droplets
For dreamy eyes of grey ;
Press out rich browns of hazel,
Last leaves, and yew-tree boles ;
And green of four-leaved clover
For little, fay-like souls.
Wing away !*

*Then some must gather gorse-buds,
And chimes of hare-bell bloom,
Sweet thyme and purple orchis,
And take them down the coombe,
Across the meads and marshes
Out to the sandy bay,
Where, in the moonlit shallows,
The young mermaidens play.*

*They love to smell our hill-flowers
Or wreath them in their locks,
And from their caverns bring us,
And leave upon the rocks,
Round pearls our nestlings play with,
And rosy, polished shells
That honey-dew hold safer
Than leaky lily-bells.
Wing away !*

*Now, ten strong wings come with me,
 To hunt those Thoughts of Hate
 That lurk in Deadman's Hollow,
 And drive them to their fate ;
 Then see the foolish Passions
 We packed in last year's snow—
 Maybe they're wise and cool now,
 And we can let them go.*

*But last, from hill and meadow,
 Rock-pool and sandy bars,
 We'll meet around the dew-pond
 To dive for drowning stars,
 And swim, and fly, and dance it,
 Till all for dreams are fain,
 Then—gossamers and flower-bells
 Till moonrise comes again.
 Wing away !'*

And far above them, dark against the sky—
 My shepherd tells—late wanderers oft have seen
 A ghostly Roman sentinel peer down
 From grassy battlements, while in the dean's
 Deep, leafy shadows, watching him, the shades
 Of British hill-men lurk.

But while his tales

Find their slow, plodding words, a smouldering
sun

Sinks through the clouds and purple mist behind
The western hills, whereon its last red arc
Glowes for a moment like the watchman's fire
Before some ancient camp. He calls his dogs
And sends them forth; eager they fly to bring
The wandering sheep together; as he waves
Them on, his crook's head catches the red light,
And shines as when within that Pyecombe forge,
A hundred years ago, his grandsire watched
A cunning hand beat out its long-thought curves.

I will go too, and help him pitch the fold
Down by the hazel-holt, and strew the lines
Of golden swedes. By darkening lanes we wend
Behind the pattering feet and tinkling bells.

It is the hour now of that wondrous blue,
Deep, rich, and luminous, old painters used
To drape about their stately dreams of God;
That lovely hour between the day and dark,
When all the sky like some vast jewel shows
A purple jewel, pure and ocean-deep,
Set o'er this universe in heaven's floor,
Wherethrough, a little while, the light intense
Filters in soft suffusion to our eyes.
And now the shepherd's lanthorn shines about

His folded flocks, its mellow, orange ray
Making a lovelier, richer blue above
And all around the little ring of light.
Oh, sweet, rare moments fading out so fast.

But see ! behind the waiting Downs, the moon
Glides up like some enchantress, silvery robed ;
And suddenly, by her mysterious spell,
Methinks the mighty shoulder of the hill,
Whereon is set that head-like ring of beech,
Is changed to some great pastoral deity,
A radiant glory circling o'er his brows.
He stands at brood, watching his sleeping world,
Beside his cold and long-forsaken shrine.
And, surely, up the misty, glimmering slopes,
With strangely leaping steps, a shadowy form
Climbs swiftly to him ; 'tis the goat-foot god !
Poor Pan, that by the same strong spell is drawn,
Free for an hour, from out his hillside cave,
Where, prisoned by a dull world's disbelief,
He dwells a shadow-king ; his shrunken pipes
Oft pressed upon a silvery beard, for still
Who sleeps beneath the moon may hear him wake
A ghostly music for his world of shades.
Hark ! sure there floats down from those altar-steps
A little run of reedy, fluting notes,

And swift there answers from the copse below
A clear, repeated, quickly swelling call,
And then a bubbling rush of melody—
The nightingale! that hears and hails his lord.

I linger still about the sleeping farm ;
Here are the lambs, that start up from their straw
And stare with bright eyes as the lanthorn beams
Above their wattled walls. How soft the moon
Shines on their gentle forms, and throws the shade
Of each small head upon its neighbour's fleece.
And in the farm-yard how the whitewashed walls
Glint in its light, and every shadow lies
How richly dark ; silvery the old slates gleam,
And dappled with leaf-shadows stand the stacks ;
A planet in each puddle shines, and see,
The muddy duckpond brims with sky and stars.
The homestead's pile of twisted chimneys looks
A fairy castle, with its battlements
And clustering towers, and where that creeper falls,
A ladder for some elfin escapade
Seems hanging from the turret-window high.
Oh, one may wander all the moonlit night,
Lingering amid the soft, grey silences,
And find, transmuted from dull things of day,
A land of unimagined loveliness.

And what of ye, dear vision-haunted hills,
To what dream-staple are ye woven now,
By white moon-magic, and the tender aid
Of what aërial alchemy? Your crests
And flowing curves seem melted in the sky,
Dissolved beneath their tides of glimmering dew,
And all your holts and hollows washed away
By stealing clouds and pearly waves of mist ;
And, wrought upon by wandering airs of night,
Ye change, as though your fairy people drew,
Here, a frail silvery lawn of gossamer,
Or there, outspread a floating, lilac gauze,
Then, in a moment, shadowed all beneath
Their sudden spread and flight of filmy wings.

I must go homeward, down the village street,
Where always till the dawn some window gleams.
Hark ! through that open lattice comes a song,
And see, a shadow on the lamp-lit blind
Sways to and fro—some mother rocks her child,
Soothing, and singing low her lullaby :—

*'Baby, baby, hush thee,
Look, one little star
Peeps in at the window,
Wondering who you are,*

*Crying still, though mother
Comes to you so soon ;
He is all alone, look,
He's lost Mother Moon.*

*Listen, how the lamb cries,
For his mother—hark !
He's afraid and lonely
In the cold and dark ;
But you are close to mother,
Here's her hand to hold,
You shall be her wee lamb,
Mother's arm your fold.*

*All the baby swallows
Sleep sound in their nest,
All the flowers are dreaming,
Rest, my baby, rest ;
Friendly little fairies
Round the pillow peep,
So nestle close to mother,
And sleep, my darling, sleep.'*

Aye, slumber well, you happy child ; and you,
Dear Downs, good night ; yet is it all too soon
To turn from you, for me it ever seems
Too early to shut out your clean, free wind,

And breathe the captive air between dull walls.
I feel my very garden-trees and flowers
For fellow-prisoners, and still must love
You best for your inviolate liberty,
That still ye stand in primal tamelessness.
And well I know a warm, pine-sheltered lair,
Hid in a hollow of your southern slopes,
And many a night my happy, closing eyes
Saw last the bright stars tangled in those boughs,
And many a morn the music of a dream
Died out into the lark-songs overhead.
Ah, close ye bring your children to the breast
Of her the mild Earth-Mother of us all,
That broad and gentle breast whereon a man
May calm his soul, and let his spirit soar
Clear of the petty things that soil her plumes.
And if one heart that loves you has its will,
How closely shall ye hold it at the last.

CHILD OF THE WESTERN SEA

O BABY mine, you are not his child
Who left us alone with the world to face ;
But once, dear, down by a seashore wild,
Where the waves of our own West Ocean race
In raptured eagerness to meet
Their longing, calling loves o' the land,
I—how shall I find the true words, Sweet ?
But you, some day you will understand—
How I felt the throb of the sea's embrace
Wake answering beats through my own young
blood,
And stir my being in new, strange ways,
Deep felt, but oh, dearest, not understood ;
And a great moon drawing the mighty wave,
Drew, with it, the small heart-tide of me,
Yet I guessed no need of a hand to save,
I had never a fear of Destiny,
But left those chanting loves of the shore,
With their wild joy beating still in my brain,
And back thro' the hayfields' scented store
I wandered, and lingered, and listened again,

Till, where the river ran down to her sea,
And the reed-bird sang to his sleepy brood,
The spirits of all these bade you be,
And tranced my soul to its mother-mood.
But not his—not his !—and nothing of him
Shall mar what sprang from the whole world's
love,
You are mine and Love's in every limb,
With a soul flashed white from heaven above.
And fair and glad as that moonlit bay,
True as the stream, and strong as the sea,
Bird-voiced, and sweet-breath'd as new-mown hay,
And ours alone, baby, shall you be !

LILAC LURE

LAST night I sat and read alone,
With windows wide to the sea,
And my dead poets' loves and dreams
Lived and companioned me ;
Below, the wave crooned, for my peace,
A murmuring monody.

And pain had reached a tideless time,
Slumbrous and passionless,
A wiser heart, methought, had lulled
To sleep the old distress ;
It seemed, at last, my lonely soul
Accepted loneliness.

Then scent of lilac floated in,
Sweet from the Springtime rain ;
O fragrant lure to rouse the love
That safe asleep had lain !
Here was the old, mad heart once more,
Awake, and wild again !

THE GOLDEN CHAIN

THOUGH I have heard much noble speech of man,
Strengthening the bands of human brotherhood,
Fostering our faith in Heaven's great clemency ;
Yet, once, that kinship gained a wider span,
A moment, once, I saw the Eternal Good,
And hope leapt up and touched on certainty.

But 'twas no bard that sang me burning words,
No Seer's prophetic voice that fired my soul,
Nor lyric rapture of love-wakened birds,
Descant of great-voiced waves, nor thunder-roll—
But from one small, despised, unlovely throat,
Low in the grass about my straying feet,
Rose to my ears, and to my heart, the note
That woke my whole world to new spirit-light.

I had gone forth the early day to greet,
And where the meadows to the pool sloped down,
Fresh-wakened from his winter sleep, and bright
In his new livery of gold and brown,
There leapt a frog, whom the great life-force drew
To seek the waterside and find his mate.

And we two met and crossed our destinies,
For, on the instant, crouched he in the dew,
Fearing this over-lord of his small fate,
And I made pause and lightly pressed upon
His form with idle foot. Then suddenly,
Sinking his head between his outstretched hands—
As one might bend before a headsman's blade—
He cried aloud ; God, how he cried to me !

The morning silence of those meadow-lands
Thrilled to the harsh, high-pitched, imploring cry,
That shocked me with its half-humanity ;
It caught me by the heart, its poor fear made
A love, I might have scorned an hour before,
Leap in my breast : ' Ah, little brother mine,
I harm thee?—No ; go thou thy life-drawn way.'

And then the Universal Love upbore
My soul : I saw the golden chain outshine
That links all life, and in the new-made day
My faith flamed up anew. For that small fate
I saw then as my own : in that poor cry
I heard my prayers to God ; and, while I live,
Remembering how my soul rocked yearningly,
I know the only answer God can give.

I WANT !

DEAREST, of all your many gifts to me,
Love, hope, and all things beautiful and true,
Does not this bless me most unceasingly—
This eager want, this vital need of you ?

Is not all deep desire most deeply blest ?
May not the happiest souls, in passion'd flight,
Pursuing ever the eternal Best,
Still hoping, still be happy—till the Night ?

What of the river's song and reinless flow,
But sad, mute mergence in the longed-for sea ?
The child's enchanted eagerness to know,
And later knowledge, with lost ecstasy ?

Watch the flushed Dawn await the coming Day,
While radiant past her his vaunt-couriers run ;
Then see her go the white laborious way
That leads from her possession of the sun.

And what of Love, the king of all desires,
Which deems he sweeter—Maybe or Has-been?
Does not the wind of chase still feed his fires,
The lonely ache still keep the lover keen?

Then, flaming towards you let my longing move,
Though ne'er within your arms its songs be sung
If so the high gods keep my homeless love
For ever yearning and for ever young.

And Want be praised that keeps my heart alive!
— Yet never dream he brooks a waiting part,
He must be following, he must strain and strive—
While still I sing to ease my wanting heart:

'If Love attain not, Love can never tire,
And though my whole life through I win you
never,
Alpha and Omega of my desire,
I want you—want you, and will want you ever!'

“WILL THERE SOON BE NINE?”

STRAIGHT from reeking slums they brought
them—

Children—to our fields and flowers ;
Drawn by happy cries I sought them,
Helped them speed the laughing hours.
Sundown knelled them back ; but, wandering
By the footpath to the hill,
Those poor fortunes sadly pondering,
There I found her lingering still :

'Twas a little, wide-eyed maiden,
In a grassy ring she stood,
Barefoot, with great foxgloves laden,
Peering up beneath her hood
Through the deepening blue of even,
For the first, faint stars ashine,
Weeping that she found but seven,—
“Oh, sir, will there soon be nine?”

Then she told her tale entrancing :—
‘Nine stars, foxgloves, fairy-rings

Brought '—said Teacher—'fairies dancing,
Fairy songs, and tiny wings ;
Would nine stars come if she waited ? '—
Then we heard an angry call
For the little one belated,
And they dragged her from it all.

Little poet, did they chide you,
Hurrying to the station-light ?
But my love has been beside you
Many and many a star-lit night ;
Still of summer eves I'm hearing
Your small—" Will there soon be nine ? "
While sad fancy sees you peering
Through the town-smoke for their shine.

Always some harsh voice comes calling
From the land of every day,
Just as fairy-wings seem falling,
Sounds the heavy tread always.
Yet, dear, dream those uplands airy,
Where the elfin foxgloves grew,
Seek still for the rings of faëry,
Count the stars your whole life through.

THE WEED-BURNER

AMONG the myriad pictures in my mind,
I see an upland where the wheat has stood,
And where, the harvest being gathered home,
The plough has turned the sleeping fields anew,
Uprooting sun-blached stubble and strong weed;
And these the trailing harrow drawing in,
The field-hands pile in dying heaps to burn;
This is the Autumn 'cleaning of the ground.'

And memory paints a late, September sun
Fast sinking in a far, low-lying west,
Where, over many a farm deep in the weald,
Trail level lines of faintly golden smoke,
Like broken rivers with their rising mists;
And in the forefront of my picture stands
A farm-lad, who, with sideways tilted form,
Holds on his fork a heap of new-lit weeds,
Lifting the pile to let the air leap through:
A plain, brown figure backed by twenty miles
Of mellow meads, smoke trails, and sunset sky.
Sudden, the crackling awns flame orange-red,
Lighting and finely tinging the tanned face,

Gilding the rough form in its sombre garb,
As Autumn sunshine paints a sapling oak ;
Or as the altar-flames might light the form
Of some lone priest convening to his aid
The mystic forces of the Fire and Air,
That his stern sacrificial rite be done—
So stands he silent, and I silent stand.

Then with those flame-hued fancies in my heart
I wander homeward, deeply pondering
That differing picture in man's doubtful life—
Great, lowly man, kind-cruel, cruel-kind,
Who will not cast his stubble to the flames,
But harvests hopefully the rotting weeds,
Knowing a reaping-hook that never rests,
And dreaming some last firing of the fields.

ESCAPE

OH, for space, sweet air, clean rain,
How these streets lie reeking !
Love, let's be our own again,
Hear our own souls speaking ;
Let us get these walls beyond,
To wave, and star, and heather,
Feel once more the primal bond
That binds the world together.

Free white road, and wild free life,
What could we win better ?
Never a touch of town-bred strife,
Never a feel of fetter ;
Yet, full service still to give
A world that thousands sigh in,
Aye, with larger scope to live,
And lighter air to die in.

Deep hid in the old, grass lanes,
Leaps our tent-side fire,
While the western rose-light wanes,
A gold moon gliding higher ;

Blackcap sings our supper through,
Mating in the willow,
Then two brown arms, my mate, for you,
A brown breast for my pillow.

“To rolling stones no moss shall come,”
Croaks the worldling ever;
Tell him, Sweet, no clogging scum
Mars the running river!
Oh, let wiseacres wag the head,
I watch my wood-smoke wreathing,
Happy in my ferny bed,
Beside your quiet breathing.

A WHITE HOUR

It was a summer evening, and the sea
Murmur'd and drowsed, a pearl-grey mystery,
Save where across it lay a silvery gleam
Like a sweet thought that lights a sweet, dim dream ;
Beyond, a brooding sky drooped to its rest,
Soft with the blue-grey of a pigeon's breast :
While over all there hung a violet veil,
Vaporous, delicate, neither deep nor pale,
But hued as though the purple heart of night
Were interwove with dawn-time's frail, blue light.
A homing sea-bird, from whose beating wing
Day's last, reflected gleam came flickering,
Seemed—as against those violet deeps afar
He glittered southward—like a flying star.
Behind us hung the high, white cliffs of Kent,
Soft-tinted then with faintest lilac, lent
By that ethereal dreamlight ; each brow set
With waving grasses and wild mignonette,
That on the fairness of the evening sky
Checkered their delicate, changeful tracery ;
While, like a maiden's half-formed dream of love,
The young moon's slender crescent drooped above,
And at the cliff's feet, whereon ocean lays
Her dyes of emerald and chrysoprase,

Close to the creamy, lace-like wavelets' edge,
There lay alone a newly storm-split ledge
Of purest white.

And there I saw you lean,
White-raimented, and playing with the green
Wet weeds and sea-shells; first I dreamed there lay
A sea-child, or the Spirit of the bay,
(And there was, ever, something in your eyes
Not all of earth—a hint of half-surprise
At things we saw not).

'Twas a fitting place
For one with your white dreams and dream-lit face—
A new-washed world, a shrine of purity,
Left fresh and fragrant by the lustral sea ;
And purity seemed showering above
From young Selene's hidden, virgin love ;
And, quivering on the violet mist afar,
It floated in the wake of that winged star.
It seemed the Powers of shore, and sea, and sky
Bade all their stainless spirits to draw nigh,
And willed that once your spotless life should be
Inwoven with their own immaculacy.
And my good angel led me to your feet,
That, by your grace, my earthbound heart might
beat,
'Spite all the soiling of my world of men,
For one white hour, at least, a child's again.

WITH THE LENGTHENING DAYS

OH, when we meet, dear heart, we have not time
To tell the half of all our bosoms hide ;
Our little hour is sped, the sullen chime
Bids each depart from each, unsatisfied.

The prism of the passing moment fleet,
Gathers love's radiance, that might shine so white,
And breaks the beams that from our spirits beat,
To rainbow beauties—but how little light !

The tide of soul flows through Time's narrowed
strait,
Behind, before, its vast, free ocean leaps ;
But there 'tis hemmed by ruthless rocks of Fate,
And hurrying foam obscures the limpid deeps.

Bliss half appals us in its hurried waste,
As though the sun across a wild sky pressed,
And in one awful hour of flaming haste
Should consummate his glories in the west.

And now, O dearest, with these lengthening days,
The sleepless longing daily stronger grows,
To roam unhastened down Love's spring-time ways,
Till all your deep heart dreams, my own heart
knows.

REFUGE IN SPRING

I FLED your cold, grey glance, O sea,
The harsh cries of your leafless bay,
And purple elm-flowers called to me,
The earth-scent drew my heart away.

Fierce seamew, from the dawn to dark
I bore your elfin mockery—
‘Where is she, Wanderer? Hark, now, hark !
I call, and my mate comes to me !’

But here, amid deep-bosomed hills,
The blackbird’s kindlier minstrelsy
Brings balm to heal a lover’s ills,—
‘Hope, hope, still hope !’ he flutes to me.

MARIE

THERE'S a little bird in my apple-tree,
And, building her lichen'd nest,
She sings all day 'Ma-rie !—Ma-rie !'
And I think she answers lovingly
Another bird, in my breast,
For the self-same song he sings to me—
 ' Marie !—Marie !'

There's a little brood in my apple-tree
That calls from its busy nest,
She fends and feeds it lovingly,
And nestles close at night, Marie ;
While a dreamland brood in my breast
Cries out for life, unceasingly—
 For love, Marie.

BASE METAL

ONE struck his friend a murderous blow,
Cursed heaven and brother bitterly,
And wanton'd with the foul and low—
But all might still forgiven be.

The other, daintier-lived by half,
Sneered condemnation on his fall,
But let the hunchback hear him laugh,
And draped the Venus in his hall.

Yet, deeper than all body-sin
That ever man's best manhood stole,
Such things are fused profoundly in
The very metal of a soul.

THE HARBOUR CLOCK

OH, lad, the lonely years have dragged away
Since you went sailing westward out to sea,
When sunset light lay golden in the bay,
And we stood watching on the little quay ;

We women—sweethearts, sisters, mothers, wives—
As boat by boat came slowly stealing past,
Out from the harbour, with the young, strong lives
Who little guessed that good-bye was their last.

Laughing they looked up, and we laughed again ;
But when you passed I would not look below,
I did not love you—so I fancied then—
And I was glad, I thought, for you to go.

I see you standing, looking back at me,
Your brown sail filling 'gainst that golden sky,
The gulls on their rock-island still I see
Rising and settling back as you sail by.

Again the harbour-bells ring out the time,
The Autumn sunset shines as then it shone ;
“ Ah, me ! — Ah, me ! — Ah, me ! ” the quarters
chime,
And the hour-bell answers “ gone—gone—gone—
gone—gone ! ”

REMEMBRANCE

“ AND we forget because we must,
And not because we will.”
Master, it is not so !
The memories that we would cherish still
Need not into the dust
Of Unremembrance go.
Let us but, as a reverent, daily rite,
Tell their tale o’er,
Unfailing as the tender, evening prayer,
And we may keep them live and bright,
Heart-deep may hold them there
To solace us for evermore ;
Till comes the welcomed, all-forgetting Rest,
From whose awakening,
E’en then, may bloom again the old delight—
Who knows?—in some undreamt of Spring.
Nay, I have held and hold it still,
No ‘ must ’ lays waste the loyal breast,
We lose but as we will !

TO 'WHYMPS'

LITTLE one, stay the flying years,
These good years I must sadly see
Glide hastening past, though each appears
Still lovelier than the last to me.

Go, with your wild-flower air, and play
Among the daffodils with Spring ;
She'll love you so, she fain must stay,
If but to learn those songs you sing.

And pluck proud Summer's regal gown,
Bid her put by her statelihood,
Tempt her to climb the breezy down,
Coax back her childish, playing mood ;

Or seek her when her rivers wane,
Where sun-bright shallows gleam and burn,
And lead her back to lie again
Where springs the cool source deep in fern.

Bid Autumn stay and tell thee o'er
Her past joys ; let her gentle eyes
Look mildly back, and gleam once more
With all their golden memories.

Delay her in some twilight dale,
Tell her how well that frosty lace,
That russet robe and misty veil
Become her wistful, dreaming face.

And Winter to your warm hearth lead,
Or round her form those young arms fling,
That, near your heart, she shall not need
To warm herself with hastening.

Old Time himself shall scarce withstand
Your tender witcheries, little one ;
So tilt his hour-glass in your hand,
And make the gold grains slower run.

Sweet lightener of a lone heart's pain,
Oh, charm and hold each hurrying year,
That mine and many a life may gain
The longer space to love you, dear.

IN THE CRYSTAL

CHILD, I would have you search, for me,
The magic crystal of your mind,
And, therein gazing steadfastly,
Speak all you find.

Bright, singing forms shall meet your eyes,
Flashing their way like sweet, shy birds ;
Swift then, before the wild wing flies,
Your net of words !

And should the grey shapes waver past,
Flickering by like ashen flames,
Then watch them gravely to the last,
Breathe low their names.

See, now—a flight of moonbeam fays !
With tiny laughs and little moans ;
Seek, for their sakes, your subtlest phrase,
Your tenderest tones.

Hush !—deep within the crystal gleams
All you have dreamt of high and good,
The lonely, mystic, holy dreams
Of maidenhood.

Ah, find them words, true words for all,
While vivid youth is swift to see,
Ere binding shades of custom fall—
And tell them me.

LOVE'S NEOPHYTE

I ROAMED at nightfall down a forest ride,
And there sweet Day lay dead, and on her corse
The vulture shades descended stealthily,
Silent, insatiate, dropping one by one ;
White moths, like ghostly fingers, brushed my face,
And overhead the owlets' harsh complaint
Came like hard sighs from some tree-spirit pent
At the oak's core, that ached for liberty ;
And, like sly, goblin footsteps following close,
The scamper of wood mice rustled the dead leaves ;
One leapt too happily, forgetting fear,
And through the shadows, like a darker shade,
On silent wings a great owl wavered past,
Wheeled and swept down on him—I heard his cry.
And ever, it seemed, the night wind in my hair
Pulsed from the vans of an inveterate Fate,
With awful patience hovering o'er my path,
Staying as I stayed, or following had I fled ;
I feared it not, no joyous step of mine
Would tempt it enviously to strike me down.

The trees with waving arms sighed wearily,
Bough ground on bough with sound of gritted
teeth—

I seemed companioned by a multitude
Of men, some young and straight, some marred
and bent,

But all, through darkness stumbling to the dark.
So my black mood made night within my breast.

But, toiling onward, in a while I saw,
Through the thin foremost ranks, a silvery gleam—
It was the moon that like an angel guide
Seemed leading us from darkness to the light,
Leading us pilgrims to her own pure shrine ;
So to the woodland's marge I came, and found
Her meadow-temple one soft glory of light,
Where broom and whin seemed kneeling worship-
pers ;

Like slender acolytes the young larches stood,
And from their censers waved the meadow-mist,
Soft wafted to that smiling saint in heaven,
Whose gleam hung trembling through my starting
tears.

On those sweet borderlands of light I stayed,
Where, silver and sable, swung the beechen spray,
And wove live shadows through the waving grass ;

Half comforted, half cloudy-hearted yet,
Still feeling all too dark and sad a thing
To soil the purity before my feet.
(Ah, woe for him that loseth touch with life !)

There lingering, I looked forth, and far away
Saw the wide, shining plain of moonlit waves,
And seemed to hear their drowsy symphony—
Or was it but the whispering of the wood ?
Then, suddenly, I knew the sound was near,
And there, a little from my sheltering boughs,
Beheld two shadowy forms that murmur'd low ;
Impearled and silvered by that tender light,
They seemed but half of earth, or all of heaven—
Erect he sat with bright eyes towards the sea,
She nestling with her dark hair in his neck,
And at the moment a far-passing ship
Crowned with its starry lights their close-leaned curls.
Were they young Pan and some sweet Dryad maid,
Shy stragglers from this old world's golden age ?
Or gentle spirits of the eventide,
Children of Night and tender Crepuscule ?
Nay, for I caught the throb of human speech,
With little, murmurous laughter lovers use ;
He twined for her a spray of trailing leaves—
Wild clematis or berried bryony—
And wreathed it fillet-like about her brows ;

Then tilting to the moonlight that sweet face
Framed in its leafy shadows and loosed hair,
He gazed, and sighed, and kissed, and gazed again.
And then there came the tense, impassioned tone
That tells Desire's own tyrannous empery ;
But, faltering, bewildered of their joy,
Beneath those mystic rays they might have been
Two unsphered angels doomed to earthly bliss,
Rocked and perplexed by tides of human blood ;
So with an exquisite ardour swayed these twain,
Their brows anointed with a chrism of light,
Their hearts imparadised by earliest love.

Then the Great Mother took his trembling hands—
I saw them seek to unveil the soft, white throat,
Yet pause, and waver, and so fall once more ;
But she he worshipped, raising radiant eyes,
With passioned gesture swift and beautiful,
And all the brave abandonment of love,
Tore wide the silks that hid her loveliness,
And flung its largess to his pleading eyes.

O fragrant lure of night-flower nectaries !
Fair fruitage orb'd from rosy-tinted buds !
Twin lilies rocking on a twilight stream !—
What were ye all to that sweet guerdon given ?
I heard the breath caught shuddering thro' his lips,

Like the swift, shivering sigh a young tree gives,
Soft-smitten by a sudden breeze of night,
And swaying, as swayed his body towards its bliss.

Then, by I know not what mysterious force,
Fierce longing of a sudden found a leash—
Maybe some spirit of Immaculacy,
Weaving and casting forth a lightning spell,
In mid-leap brought it quivering to his feet ;
Or were fierce blood-tides subtly drawn upon
By that bright angel of the silver light?
A moment first, of delicate equipoise,
Tense, vibrant 'twixt impassioned sense and soul,
Then in an exaltation of delight,
A reverent ecstasy of utmost joy,
Before that maiden shrine my lover fell,
And worshipped on his knees, with low-bowed head.

Softly I stole then from that sacred place,
My darkness flooded by its holy light,
And all the ordures of a satyr-world,
In dews and beams of that white memory
Were washed away, and Love reigned Lord of Life.
Old faith and tenderness welled up once more,
Like cool springs blessing a long-barren waste,
And, 'neath the velvet spaces of the night,
The sullen vapours rolled from off my soul,

The mist of years, that clouded memory,
Rose, and my mind was rich and clean once more.

Then all my senses wrought me miracles !
I marked the tiniest leaves of topmost boughs ;
A blackcap as I passed awoke and sang,
And in his eyes I saw the moonlight shine ;
I heard the harbour-bell chime miles away ;
The shrillest treble of the smallest bat ;
And night-flower scents, I never knew before,
Rose like breathed blessings ; and the meadow-grass
Brushed on my fingers with a lover's touch.

So to my hill-side home ; yet not alone,
But like a king that comes to take his crown,
Attended by a radiant retinue—
By bright-eyed spirits of youth's fairest hours,
By laughing souls of long-forgotten joys,
And lost illusions grown to starry truths,
Hope walked beside me whispering of new heavens,
Life held a crown graved with the one loved name,
And from my door with welcoming arms came
forth
My dear Dead, with the sweet eyes unforgot,
The gentle voices unforgettable ;
And my awed soul thrilled 'neath the breath of God.

O lover who gave back my faith in love,
O friend who made me friends once more with life,
Know'st thou at moments a new spirit-strength,
With sense of peace and benison bestowed?
'Tis then my re-born soul seeks out thy soul,
To pay again its glad undying debt
For that pure vision of virginity—
The lamb-white throat, and passion, panther-like,
Held in thy silver leash of perfect Love.

A DAY

HERE was a joyous, radiant King of Days !
From out the sea up sprang the jolly sun,
Like some bold swimmer rising from the deep,
His raised arms all a-drip with ruddy light,
His broad breast heaving as he breathed once more—
And my heart rose and drank delight with him !

The mid-day moon went sailing airily,
Like a frail, silvery bubble from the pipe
Of some Titanic youngling at his play—
And my life's bubble hovered iris-hued !

While all the glowing zenith rang, for me,
One glorious pæan of ecstatic light,
As though a choir of flaming Seraphim,
Over the burning bastions of Heaven,
Bent in full chorusing with tongues of fire—
And all my soul went spiring up in song !

Then, thick amid the smithy-reek of night,
Sprang forth the stars, like sparks fresh beaten out

Upon the eternal anvil-iron of Fate
By some Vulcanian forger of new worlds—
And my worn world he forged afresh for me !

Or like rich jewels closely sewn upon
A purple curtain that scarce veiled from view
The imperishable courts of Paradise,
That my soul-vision pierced adoringly.
Delightful Life ! Enchanting Earth of ours !
Here was a day that had me by the heart !

THE TREES OF DREAM

WE set our trees how hopefully,
And feed them with our hearts' red blood,
And guard them round as best we may ;
But cold winds warp the boughs awry,
And passers break the sapling wood,
Or bruise the young buds carelessly,
And go their thoughtless way.

But you who hack and stamp the root
With wanton hand, or heel of hate—
You, nearest hearts that well might bless—
'Tis you must answer for the fruit,
O cold hearts, deadlier than the knife !
Those outer ministers of Fate,
Theirs was but ignorance unkind ;
But yours a true blood-guiltiness,
(For Thoughts are Things, and Dreams alive)
You murderers of the Mind !

BELLE SAUVAGE

OH, I must be done with this living lie,
The languorous couch and the sheltered way,
Wild Love is my lord, and his mate am I—
And I grow less worthy with every day :

He who laughs as these weak-knee'd worldlings
pass,
And hunts with the great winds, wing and wing,
Who rolls and supples his strength in the grass,
And drinks from his hands at the mountain
spring.

Oh, what do I care for your sighing vows !
Give me the love and the jealous hate
Of the stag that bells 'neath the forest boughs,
And fights to the death for his chosen mate.

I feel no thrill 'neath your timid touch—
'Tis a boy's or a half-man's heart confest—
Nay, better the love that dares overmuch,
The crushing clasp, and the bruise on the breast.

Great Life ! how I loathe all these whining fears
That scarce dare bid that a child shall be !
I dare all the chance of the coming years,
And would have a great man-child on my knee.

But I hate the shut house and the midnight bars,
He should spring from my life in the old wild
way,

Begot 'neath the blessing of Summer stars,
And born in the sun of an April day.

And a jealous fear still haunts my heart
Lest a son of my womb be reared among
These men machines, but to play his part
With a narrowed breast and an arm less strong.

Savage am I? Well, so let it be—
A pulse from those pagan hearts afar ;
Yet—I have my dream of man's destiny,
And over my wild hills there burns a star.

WISDOM

THAT night, across the feasting and the wine,
I caught my lover's eyes,
Hunger'd, aye, starving for the light in mine
I would not show, because I thought me wise—
Wise, my God, wise !

I knew he loathed the gabble and the glare ;
Without, a moonlit sea
Silver'd and sang, the whispering night lay fair ;
I knew he longed to wander forth with me ;
But I was wise !—

Wise, wicked wise, who but remember how
He would have laid
The chrism of his kiss upon my brow,
When the farewell, I hasten'd so, was said—
Oh, hateful wise !

Dead love I loved too wisely to love well,
Now, love-bereaven,
I pray, if wisdom drag me not to hell,
God grant you meet a fool's kind face in heaven,
Seeing at last, these wet, unblinded eyes—
Mine, once so wise.

THROUGH THE BORDERLANDS

TRAVELLER through the Lands of Love
See you hasten never,
Each delight to which you move,
Passed, is passed for ever.

'Tis throughout the waiting days
Happiest thoughts come thronging,
Welcome, then, the dear delays,
Love your hours of longing.

And the first-fruits of each bliss
Set the soul a-burning,
Slowly, then, lest one you miss—
There is no returning.

Kiss first where her light foot fell,
Ere lips touch a finger,
Miserly your riches tell,
Linger, lover, linger !

Let there dawn a many days
Ere the kiss grow bolder,
Once beyond meridian blaze,
E'en Love's sun shines colder.

And, so loitering, you shall learn—
What wise hearts discover—
Hid delights at every turn :
Loiter, loiter, lover !

Love and longing interwove,
Haste not to dissever ;
Traveller through the Lands of Love,
Linger, linger ever !

COMPASSION'S PEARL

You easy Optimists who strew
With flowers of platitude your way,
The world goes all so well with you,
You blind your eyes, and blandly say,
 'Tis well with all the world.'

While you, stern Pessimists, who preach
A creed that proves contentment's bane,
Oft, 'neath your shell of rugged speech,
Born of the fret of human pain,
Compassion lies impearled.

THE BLIND TRYST

O LOVE, I was always a fool and blind,
But I thought, in my heart, could you come
again—
Come as you once came, good, fair, and kind—
I should know and see clear, now, and heal the
pain ;
Could you come again.

But last night over the downs by the sea,
'Neath the sad, grey light of a clouded moon,
I climbed to our tryst by the wind-bent tree,
Where we met, and I wasted, one night in June;
O dead love—lost June !

There were mists in the meadows under the hill,
And as I drew near to the twisted thorn,
One wisp seemed to cling there, lingering still,
Then slow on a sighing breeze was borne
From our old, grey thorn.

So I lay and looked down on the ghostly meads,
And that drifting, shadowy company,

And ached to remember your unguessed needs,
And thought how my heart, now, was clear to
see,

Could you come to me.

But that midnight, sudden I woke and knew—
That wisp that had waited and clung so there,
(O my blind, fool's heart !) it was you, love, you,
With your beckoning hands and your floating
hair—

O, my life, you were there !

TO A BOOT-BLACK

You never bend low, little lad, but I feel
A something like shame—is it right you should
 kneel,
 Can life find your hand nothing fitter to do
 Than make the mud fly from a lazy man's shoe?

Yet who knows for whom what employ may be
 meet?—

One remembers of old-time a washing of feet—
 And the heft-bolt may hold half the strength of a
 knife,
 Or the lowliest task prove a linch-pin of life.

And would that my pen could compete, little lad,
With this last masterpiece of your brushes and pad ;
 For to buy of my wares, then, the world could
 but choose,
 Could I polish my sonnets as you polish shoes.

DREAM-WITCHED

A LITTLE while since, how I welcomed dawn !
The whole wide world lay bright and beckoning,
From gilded hill-crest, to grey, dew-dim'd lawn—
My world, and I its king !

Forth then I sprang, swift to day's splendid strife—
How short the hours, how sunset anger'd me !
For very joy and deep desire of life
I loathed sleep's lethargy.

What though my lady owned me not her lord ?
Her love throughout life's music still would seem
A passionate, rich, recurring master-chord
That throb'd through all the theme.

But stealthy Night, whom homage I refused,
Set for my dream-led sense a subtle snare ;
Words may not whisper how, save that he used
Her arms, her breast, her hair.

Ah, swift and sure the gleaming mesh was drawn,
And now my day has grown one long desire
For vision-joys that vanish with the dawn,
And waste me with their fire.

Dear love, O help me!—weave some counter-charm,
Bring back my days their old, fresh, free delight;
That dream should serve for an eternal balm
Through some eternal night.

I must have back my days : the old, clean pride
In doing, not in dreaming ; give me still
The song, the joy of strife, the swinging stride,
And breasting of the hill.

Win back my waking bliss at dawn's first beam,
Let me back laughing to my world of men,—
Oh, some dawn, love, transcend that night-time
dream,
And give me day again !

HOMING BIRDS

WHEN my dear love an hour is by my side,
Who dwells so far away,
Oh, then, that time and space may be defied
Some other, lonelier day—

My longing, to her heart, slips like a dove
Into its own safe nest,
And bright-winged hopes, swift impulses of love,
I loose into her breast ;

And their strong pinions ply between us two,
So many miles apart ;
For oft, when Life's bright eyes fall dull of hue,
And hope faints in the heart,

When cares haunt darkly in a bat-like brood
About my lonely bed,
Suddenly—peace, un hoped beatitude,
Seems hovering overhead.

Ah, then, bless'd wings, I know well what ye
are—

My birds sent back to me ;
Know she has fed and cherished you afar,
Fondled, and set you free.

Oh, loose them still, love, from your chamber
white,
For still, whate'er betide,
Waking or sleeping, dearest, day and night
My dovecot doors stand wide.

PASSION'S FIDELITY

FALSE to you?—nay, I will not have it so,
I love you always as I loved you then ;
But mind and eyes that made me king of men,
Where are they ? Show them now before I go.

You cannot ; and in passioned faith to these,
I cannot love the altered eyes and mind ;
Come, let us talk together, we shall find
Some other ground whereon to build our peace.

You will not ? Go, then, leave me to my past,
You do but tear me from yourself and youth,
Go, for—God help us, this is very truth—
You must, that I may keep you to the last.

RE-CREATION

A DRIFTING wreck of womanhood was she ;
Her girlhood's friends but hard-eyed strangers
were,
Her earlier self, that sometimes passed her by,
Disdained the thing that she had come to be ;
The world worse for her living seemed to her,
She loathed her tainted life, but dared not die.

And yet, for even her, there came a day—
So lustral do the tides of nature move—
When, with the dawn, re-flowed the deathless
Good ;
When beautiful—aye, beautiful—she lay,
Glowing, a thing of hope, a thing of love,
And made Madonna by her motherhood.

THE JOYS UNPRIZED

MAY or November, any night or day,
In any land, one hour of living give—
And while the feet may roam the old free way,
Oh, but 'tis rich to live !

Never a moment but our clouded sight
Lets what a world of wonder pass unprized,
But, slipping by, go beauty and delight,
Unloved, unrecognized.

For, ever the great sun our pathway paves
With myriad gleams and shadows, blent anew
'Neath woven leaves, or over leaping waves—
And we perceive how few !

And what a wealth of Thought goes pulsing by,
But half-concealed behind men's passing eyes,
How countless, 'neath those filmy curtains, lie
Raptures and reveries !

Oh, all the earth is vibrant with that spring
Of song impassioned Life pours, far and near;
What priceless poems would come whispering
Had we the hearts to hear.

Thy hidden founts of hope, Life, who may tell?—
Thy patient, star-ward climb since earth began,
The conquered lusts, the love unspeakable,
And man's brave dreams for man.

Yet from thy sea of wonder still we take
But what a few poor drops; the great tide sets,
Bearing us miracles, and we but make
Our careless cast of nets.

O Life, forgive our purblind, listless hours
Amid the rapture waiting to be won ;
Rouse these dull hearts before the long night
lowers,
And thy rich day be done !

THE MANY DEATHS

THERE comes a blest sleep by and bye,
To most hearts but a quiet need ;
Yet many a death a man must die
Before he be at rest indeed.

He sees, in dreams, his own young face,
His airy step through dreamland flies ;
Then at the mirror stoops to gaze
On wrinkled brow and weary eyes.

He reads of Love that knows not age,
And feels its life that shall not die ;
Then sees, upon the singer's page,
His yellow'd thumb-nail, ridged and dry.

The white-haired poet pales before
The waiting lines that long have lain
Half-wrought, to find that never more
The glow and glory comes again.

And what has Death left still to slay
In those bent o'er their dearest when
The loved eyes film? They die that day
As they shall never die again.

TIME TO GO

YOUNG April's here, and all the wood's a-stir,
Yet my feet start not to be following her ;
Wild cherry-trees are hung with snow of Spring,
Yet my hope knows no sudden blossoming ;
A mating bird sings clear those boughs among,
But my sad heart sends back no answering song ;
What, heart of mine, lie you so cold and numb ?
Ah, time we went !—dear Life, my night has come.

I hear the ripple of child-laughter low,
And, heart, you leap not—it is time to go ;
I see young lovers claspt, with rapture dumb,
And yet I long not—yea, the end is come ;
Long since, the faith of early days lay dead,
And though I dream a loftier in its stead,
Let us go now, O heart, lest we should know
That dream can die too. It is time to go.

THE MUSIC OF THE GODS

I FOUGHT my way at midnight to a great
Wild headland; far below its storm-swept height
A mad sea weltered, and a ghostly light
Gleamed where the rocks, like gnashing fangs of
hate,
Champed their pale foam; bird screamed to scream-
ing mate,
And overhead, 'mid blown froth scudding white,
Fierce minatory voices filled the night
With multitudinous presages of fate.

There, breathless, at that cauldron brink I stood,
And, 'mid the wild roar thundering up the steep,
Came moans and cries of souls that seemed to
weep
Lost lives and loves; and once, methought, the
flood
Stifled a drowning shriek. Yet, strange, a mood
Of joyous calm came after, wondrous deep,
And when I laid me on my couch to sleep
Lulled by those distant sounds, my dreams were
good.

So, from the wild shores of humanity—

Dead poets dreamed—the music of the gods
Like incense rises forth these beating clods,
The brains and breasts of men ; and could there be
An end to that sad wailing of our sea,
No moans of hapless men beneath their rods,
Or mandrake-screaming from the earthly sods,
Then were a note lost from their symphony.

And men, as gods, may hear this music rare—

Cries from the deep of ancestry combine
With sobs and laughter of our living line,
To charge with melody the haunted air :
Then take, O supine gods that know not care,
Or ye, I dream of, gentler powers divine,
Or men my brothers, these sad songs of mine,
And justify in music their despair.

But let me hush my being till the roll

Of spirit-seas comes chanting to my ear,
And strange shades from the perished past draw
near,
With phantoms whispering of man's final goal ;
Till, linked by that great music with the Whole,
Elder than Earth my memories appear,
And for one mystic moment I can hear
Life's deep call to the deep within my soul.

LEAVES

I LAY alone high on the dreaming Downs,
And steeped my life in blessed silentness ;
Autumn was dying, and her lilac mists
Like gentle, grieving ghosts of summer days,
Went lingering down the quiet vale below,
Along the water-meadows, and about
The yellowing elms that shield the little farm
To seaward ; while from far-off folds there came
The faintest tinkle of bells, and overhead
The linnets' little, mellow lutany
Rose, and was gone : so silence ebbd and flowed.

And I lay dreaming, happier than I knew,
Among the thyme and last, brine-withered flowers,
Till the mild sunshine glided from the hill ;
Then, spurred on by the prick of passing life,
And hope of something fairer just beyond,
That still forbid the earthly traveller rest,
I rose and wandered o'er the western ridge ;
And there, in the next hollow, all alone,
A beech-tree stood, flushed in the westering light.

No least wind stirred, but last night's frost had
loosed

The dying leaves, and in a ceaseless shower,
By gentle, lingering spirals, one by one,
Like little red and golden flames they fell,
The low rays shining through them, till a cloud
Dimmed them to amber and russet leaves once more;
Lightly they settled, leaf on fallen leaf,
Making a sighing murmur, low and sad,
The last and tenderest of their many songs.
Intent I gazed and listened, till the sound,
Changeless, incessant, brought the waking trance
That draws the dreamland fancies through the
brain :

Surely I pried upon the lonely death
Of some shy woodland creature that had crept,
Wounded, away from all her mates to die ;
Drooping she stood, while fast the bright drops fell,
And soon the patient form would sway and fall :
My feet profaned her sacred solitude.

Or was some miser-spirit, for his greed,
Tree-pent, and doomed to let his glittering hoard
Slip down through helpless fingers, and so stand
Distraught to see it bare to every eye ?

Or had some golden queen, grown sad and old,
In panic at her wanton, wasted days,
Thinking to break their strong, inveterate spell,

Come there to cast her gems and gauds away,
And pace thenceforth a barefoot path to Heaven?

Then through my dreaming rose the tearful
truth :

Sure 'twas the sweet Year's very self that stood
Brooding and sad, to know herself at last
Bereft of all the bright joys of her prime,
Her birds, the mating-songs, and myriad flowers,
Even the very rose of love lay dead,
That Life, her lover, sware should never die ;
All gone, and so the golden tears must fall,
And lips wail low their murmuring threnody.
But, Sweet, not all alone thou standest now,
Here beats a heart that waits a deeper death,
That leaf by leaf has seen love droop and die.

O great World-Soul, that ever ebb'st away,
To flood what far-off haven dost thou flow ?
Wilt thou not whisper now ? See where we stand
Waiting the end, my sister tree and I.
Speak, and we listen ! But the only voice
Still murmured from her falling leaves—" Hush,
hush ! "

Then Twilight crept to hear the plaintive song,
And still I lingered for its faint, last sigh ;
But with the night there came an aching need

Of human voices ; my far window-gleam
Called from the silent valley, and I went ;
But all the way I felt the leaves fall fast
About my heart, and heard their last, low sound,
That I must also lose, deep in the Night.

REVEILLE

As some great captain, ere the morn be red,
Might watch his tired ranks sleeping in the dew,
Linger a moment, with some sense of rue,
Then bid Reveillé sound o'er quick and dead—

So the loth sun-god leaves his cloudy bed,
Then, swift the heavy hangings striding through,
Bids the dawn's silver bugles sound anew,
His golden banners streaming overhead.

Like camp-fire smoke the mist of morning stirs,
Like strewed arms seem the dewy glistenings,
And, as that shining clarion peals on high,
Up spring the trees like bright-faced warriors,
Behind him each his cloak of shadow flings,
And one great shout of colour shakes the sky !

TO EACH HIS OWN

A DIFFERING soil to every differing soul,
And each may nourish but its proper flowers,
Yet shall the best dreams of these hearts of ours
Rise each to Heaven, though far as pole from pole.

Hast thou but sand-dunes where the wild seas roll,
Where blown sea-holly 'neath their shelter
cowers?

Yet grudge no man his lily-garden bowers,
Nor crave the roses in his silver bowl.

Give praise for wheat-fields and their golden prime,
And bless the workers that about them go ;
But if thy dreamings from the bare Downs flow,
Up, then, brave heart !—up where the harebells
chime,
Sing in the light air, breathe the scented thyme,
And waste no longings on the corn below.

FORBEAR !

FRIEND, dost thou wake while still 'tis early night,
Stung by injustice, or some maddening wrong,
And do the swift night-thoughts come raging,
strong

With all the indignant strength of truth and right ?
Then stay thy pen, or seal thy strained lips tight,
Stand fast and hold the leaping wrath in thong—
Thou'rt one, a million such wronged souls among.

For their sake spur thy heart up to the height
Of a supreme forbearance ; store the strength
Thy words had wasted ; so thy life at length—
Working with Time and that hid spark of good

In every hostile breast—shall win to peace,
With skill to furnish, as thine own pangs cease,
Solace for all thy heart-sore brotherhood.

THE PRICE

O POET-HEART, and hast thou marred thy song
With lower thinking, so their hearts be stirred
Who dwell about thee? Is thy soul deterred
By coldness given where cheer and love belong?
Great is the bitterness; but thou art wrong—
Trust in the noble few, sound thy great word,
Leave them to mould thy meaning to the herd
That would but trample on thy dreams. Be strong!
Suffer thine isolation!—minding ever
Those lone hours of the Garden and the Tree,
Bearing with reverence thy lesser part;
So shall the God within forsake thee never,
And solitude bring peace and strength to thee,
In that Gethsemane of thine own heart.

MUSIC'S INCANTATION

SWIFT at its call wild storms of soul arise,
Great rushing waves of lost emotion leap
And stir that unimaginable deep—
The Past within, which sleeps but never dies :
Pale forms float up with sad, accusing eyes,
And, wakened from their immemorial sleep,
Ghosts of departed exaltations weep
At long-forgotten magnanimities ;
Fierce, primal joys flash out like jewelled kings,
Triumphant sins from lives long vanished hence,
And brute-like shapes in outgrown bonds of sense;
But at the last the spent wind only brings
Faint sobs and far, abysmal mutterings
From that vast sea of soul-experience.

THE 'COMMON MAN'

HIS dullard life!—and has it but your scorn?
Yet for one countless stake he plays therein,
For heaven and hell to him have opened been,
Here or hereafter, in that he was born :

By him a hero's laurel may be worn,
That Galahad could do no more than win,
If, 'spite man's bestial past and present sin,
He live life still unshamed from morn to morn :

And though his days be filled with sorrows keen,
Though man's disdain should grind him to the
dust,

On one strange honour he may surely trust—
To stand, despite his part once low and mean,
Sole actor in life's last, great, tragic scene—
Death's isolation, awful and august.

THE STAR OF SUFFERING

IF in His spirit-likeness God made man—
Man who to win delight must suffer woe—
Then what if this sad world should only show,
To perfect vision, as that little span
Of the All-Spirit's being wherein He can
Conceive of sorrow, that He, too, may know
Full joy? Oh, if in truth this should be so,
Then springs all blessing from our seeming ban!

Then give we God perfection of delight,
Nor mar The Mind by one nerve spared in vain;
While he who here is honoured with most pain
Helps most the bliss of heaven to perfect height,
And plumes his own joy for eternal flight
When the One Soul receives all souls again.

THE WARDRESS

A TYRANT, is there, that true friend should be,
Her name is Beauty, and her ruthless place
Gaoler to many a woman's inmost grace,
Forbidding that the real self stand free.

Without the prison-palace watches she,
That none may know the captive-one's true face,
And claims, in dungeon-dues, the priceless days,
Grasping at last her very soul for fee.

But, all being stol'n, the gaoler leaves the gate ;
Then the true-woman spirit, starved and white,
By the long prison-years brought piteous low
From out her narrow cell creeps forth, too late,
Ashamed and haggard in the unpitying light—
O sister-souls of women, is 't not so ?

LOVE'S NIGHTINGALE

A MAY-MOON rapt the birds to ecstasy,
The tree-flowers, delicate, shimmering in its light,
Seemed God's most tender fancies, to my sight ;
I lay upon the side-sward 'neath a tree
Whence fell a wild cascade of melody—
My nightingale outsang all others quite,
As they all lesser singers of the night,
An Israfel of nightingales was he.

Then memory flashed me vision of a lover
Holding a bird's egg for his love to kiss,
Warm from the little nest they bent above :
My Israfel, your secret I discover !—
Sing, sing then, how sweet miracles like this
Pour from the passioned lips of all deep love !

DELIVERANCE

(*Exodus*, xiv. 19).

THANK God for Night that, like the pillar'd cloud
He set between His people and their past,
Blots out Day's ills that else had followed fast,
Its frets and fears, beneath whose yoke I bowed.
'Drowned lie they all,' a great Voice cries aloud,
 'In my deep tides of darkness overcast ;
Once more life lies before thee, clean and vast !'
So, with fresh hope, fresh faith, fresh love endowed,
Each dawn I fling the past away, and burn
In blest re-incarnation, having won
 A new-made world whose splendour floods with
 light
This temple of my soul, which now I turn
In reverent orientation to its sun,
And therein stand assoiled. Thank God for
 night !

TO THE DEATH

REST?—how can rest come ere the end, for me?
Between an angel and a brute my soul
Is haled along; and, till that doubtful goal
Be won, struggling but still close chained go we.

Great God! her prayers, his answering ribaldry!
Her chants that rise while his low cursings roll!
Cool springs of love, fierce lusts like burning coal,
High hopes, foul fears, all in my bosom be.

So, struggling heavenward, slipping still towards
hell,
With spiring hopes, and Stygian despair,
Adoring yet degrading her, I go;
Loathing yet pampering him. O Heaven tell
If, wrestling at the last fall, I may dare
To hope a conquered beast shall lie below.

THE LAST HELP

O BRAVE words chanted clear in Death's despite !
O heavenly hopes born of man's longing mind !
Too like strong fortresses are ye designed,
That by their stoutness own the foeman's might.

Stars, like great thoughts, may glitter, far as bright,
Moons—too like faiths—gleam where the long
roads wind,
And thence the wanderer may some guidance
find,
Yet how his heart leaps at his window light !

So, at the last, may memory bring to me
For help—all bravest words and creeds above—
How, thou, O Mother, paced the ghostly grove,
Fearless of aught that at the end might be,
And met the Pale-One's face unflinchingly,
Serene and smiling 'neath thy shield of Love.

L'ENVOI

O joy and despair of my lonely years,
Once, doubting, I followed thee, Singing-Star,
For cold, songless hearts fed my heart with fears,
And laughed at my faith in thy lamp afar.

And well have I known my songs' utmost span
But an echo—ill-sung and how little worth!—
Of God's great, ineffable poem of Man,
And his life, and his love, and death on earth ;

And feared lest my singing had only grown
As the pride of a fool, in his dull, fool's way,
Still scrawling his folly on tree and stone
Wherever his vandal feet may stray.

But I dreamed me, once, lost in a desert land
Where I never might see man's face again ;
Yet there, on the rocks and the wet sea-sand,
Still I wrote my songs, and forgot the pain ;

And still for my solace the charm held strong,
And I knew, as of old, it must ever be ;
Then I woke—to a trust in thee, Star of Song,
And a joy in thy splendid height from me !

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